

The MYSTERY of HARTLEY HOUSE

by Clifford S. Raymond
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CHAPTER XI—Continued.

He was a curious instrument of such abstract justice. He served fate as if it had sworn out a police court warrant. As a nemesis he was a clown, or at least a headie or a balliff. The manner in which he served inevitability will appear. Mr. Sidney's crime, I soon saw, whatever manner or kind of crime it had been, was one of unescapable consequence.

"A man named Dravada," said Morgan, after we had looked at each other in interrogative hostility for an instant, "has come to our agency with a very strange tale. From what I learn of the things he and his disreputable attorney have done, I can see that they are heading directly into the penitentiary. I understand that the lawyer is dead and that all their schemes are closed. Dravada has come to our agency, and I have come directly to you. I want you to understand our methods of doing business. They are honest. The paper Dravada carries about him says that crime has been committed. Are you familiar with that paper?"

"I have seen what a blackmailing lawyer said was a copy of a sheet in the possession of Dravada."

"I am not much of a literary man," said Morgan, taking from a black leather case a manuscript which he handed to me, "but I've read 'The Moonstone,' and this looks to me like a couple of chapters copied out of it. Probably you are familiar with 'The Moonstone.'"

"I have read it several times."

"Then what do you make of that manuscript?"

I looked at several of the pages. The manuscript was a copy of part of "The Moonstone."

"I am right, then," said Morgan. "Moonshine! It had better be called. That's the manuscript the maid stole out of your man Jed's room and that Dravada took after the lawyer had been killed. Here's my reasoning—maybe you will be interested: This man Jed and this fellow Dravada worked for Mr. Sidney in Montevideo. Dravada is a thief; Jed isn't much better. Dravada got one sheet of a manuscript that had something to do with a concealed crime. Jed got the rest of the manuscript, so Dravada says. Dravada has been trying to make Jed go 50-50. He has been trying to get the rest of the manuscript. He'll murder Jed yet."

"Now here's the way I look at it: A man like Jed does not go to the trouble of copying a couple of chapters of 'The Moonstone' and planting the copy in his room just to devil a desperate fellow like Dravada. He does



"I Suppose You're Something to Miss Sidney, Too."

it for a purpose. That proves he has the real manuscript. That proves there is a concealed crime. Our agency is interested in finding out what that crime was. As an agent of the law I am interested in this case. Are you? Is this family interested?"

"I am not, and the family is not."

"I'll take your word for it, but I'll see Mr. Sidney."

"It is quite impossible. He never sees callers. I am his doctor. I should forbid it."

"Then I'll see Mrs. Sidney."

"That also is impossible. I am her representative."

"Well, I'll talk to Miss Sidney."

"That also is out of the question."

"I suppose you're something to Miss Sidney, too."

"I am her fiance."

"You are a little bit of everything around here. Well, how about seeing this man Jed?"

"That can be arranged," I said, and I ran for Jed. When he came in, I said:

"Jed, this is Mr. Morgan, of the Metropolitan Detective Agency. He wants to talk to you."

"Yes, sir," said Jed, and I went out of the room.

In about twenty minutes Jed came to me again.

"Mr. Morgan wishes to speak to you once more," he said.

"Well?" I said, looking at him inquiringly.

"A downright, direct and positive sort of a person," he said, smiling, "but although keen, not a real intelligence. He is waiting for you, sir."

CHAPTER XII.

Mr. Morgan was pacing forth and back in the office much enraged.

"Look here," he said. "This does not get us anywhere. My time is valuable. I am wasting a lot of it. I'll tell you now I've got enough information to know this is the sort of case we like, a tough case. I haven't been fooled a bit. You may not be interested. Maybe no one here is interested, but I'm interested. Do you get that, Mr. Doctor, Mr. Representative, Mr. Fiance? I'm interested. This case is going to be gone into. There's a crime concealed somewhere which will do our agency good to discover. We shall do it for money. The advertising will be worth thousands of dollars to us. Do you understand me?"

"I know you can make life very miserable for us for a couple of days. You will have to use your own judgment."

"I can pack that lawn out there with reporters and photographers from the city. They'll see and talk to Mr. Sidney. Take my word for that. They'll see and talk to Mrs. Sidney and to Miss Sidney. I can bring that down to you by midnight."

"The house has some protections," I said. "You might suggest that to the newspaper people for their own good."

"The shyder and that common thief Ann Forth got in, didn't they?"

"I don't know Ann Forth."

"No, but you know Agnes Mitchell. Well, you know Ann Forth, man. Say, you simpleton, you don't know what you're up against. This story just as it stands—copy of sheet from manuscript—Spaniard—running off with Jed—thief of manuscript—death of shyder—Ann Forth back in house—hidden crime—millionaire recuse—beautiful daughter—haunted house—its copy for every paper in the country."

I knew it and was appalled by the certain prospects.

"It would be a very cruel and useless thing to do," I said, "but as I told you, you must use your own judgment. We are not interested in this child's nursery story you are following, and I do not intend to have people who are not well disturbed by the questioning of a detective."

I knew how to deal safely with Morgan, but the method was out of the question. I should indeed have been a simpleton if I had not known. All I had to ask was "How much?"

We were wholly resolved against paying blackmail, knowing that it was only a gradual descent to ruin. It was better to go in one direct plunge if it were fated.

Morgan looked at me steadily for a few moments as if giving me a chance to listen to the voice of reason. His method had been perfect. He was beyond a legal suspicion, and I knew he was dangerous.

"Well, young man," he said at last, "we are both wasting time—at least I am. But it's only fair to you to tell you that this is not the end of the case. It's the kind of a case we like, something tough and difficult. We may not make any money out of it, but when we are ready, we at least shall be paid in publicity. You needn't be afraid of the reporters and photographers just now. It's too good a case to waste that way. There's always that, no matter what we turn up."

"This case is just good enough to spend some money on. It's just good enough to send a couple of men down to Montevideo. I'll tell you in advance that is what we're going to do."

"We'll go into the life of Mr. Sidney with a fine-tooth comb, and we'll do it well. We are accustomed to doing such things well. And we'll do this well. We'll get something here or in South America. We'll follow that something until we know why Jed copied two chapters of 'The Moonstone' and hid them in a box built in the springs of his bed."

"Then we'll come back here and ask for a little more co-operation in serving the purposes of the law, and if we don't get some help, the reporters and photographers will be swarming on the lawn. That's all, Mr. Doctor."

I knew at first glance that Morgan's face was malevolent. Now I saw it extraordinarily so.

"I'll have Jed show you the door," I said.

"And tell him we do not know whether we take Dravada to South America or not. It will make him happy."

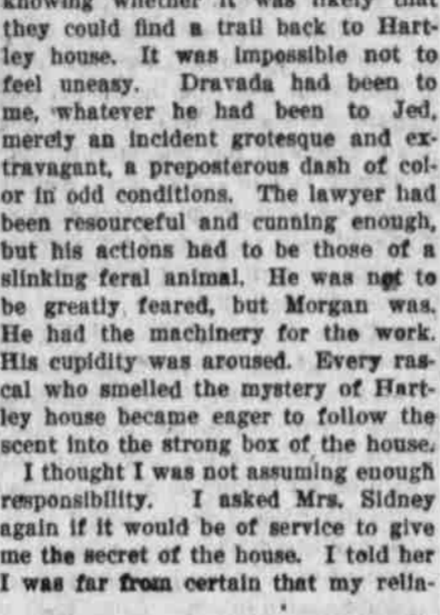
Jed was scrupulously the servant as we dismissed Mr. Morgan.

That was the fashion in which inevitability entered the house. We were no longer dodging chance. Morgan surely and certainly represented fate. It had become only a matter of time when in one fashion or another the security of this home, so carefully studied, would be invaded successfully. That was apparent. It might be that Morgan would be able to expose us to nothing more than the publicity he mentioned. But that was sufficient; it would be destructive.

I had telephoned McGuire, telling him of Morgan's part in the new turn of events, and he later informed me that two of the Morgan agency operatives had sailed for South America, taking Dravada with them. The hunt had begun—but a long way off.

The hunters knew as much of the quarry as I did, and I had no way of knowing whether it was likely that they could find a trail back to Hartley house. It was impossible not to feel uneasy. Dravada had been to me, whatever he had been to Jed, merely an incident grotesque and extravagant, a preposterous dash of color in odd conditions. The lawyer had been resourceful and cunning enough, but his actions had to be those of a sinking feral animal. He was not to be greatly feared, but Morgan was. He had the machinery for the work. His cupid was aroused. Every rascal who smelled the mystery of Hartley house became eager to follow the scent into the strong box of the house.

I thought I was not assuming enough responsibility. I asked Mrs. Sidney again if it would be of service to give me the secret of the house. I told her I was far from certain that my rela-



And, by George! She Danced Up and Kissed Her Mother and Kissed Me.

bility and trustworthiness had been established, but if they had been, and if the question were merely one of fidelity and stanchness, I hoped, I could be regarded loyal.

"If only those qualities were involved, John," said Mrs. Sidney, "you could have the innermost secrets of my soul. I would trust you with anything anywhere, but for your own salvation I would not have this terrible thing in your consciousness. Knowledge of it would curse you. It will be unless there is expiation in a great love, and expiation in self-sacrifice. Jed's soul is gone beyond redemption. I dare not think of Mr. Sidney nor of myself. But Jed is a gross sinner."

She was by nature and wish an unemotional, untheatrical lady, but she was dramatic in her seriousness. Then she said:

"I should like to have you for a son."

I was much embarrassed—the more so when she kissed me. To conceal some disconcerting emotions I laughed awkwardly and went on about my business. I was to go blindfolded into the intricacies of the strangest situations I ever encountered.

With early October beautiful days came and brought tranquillity. Life is full of zest in October, the rich, rare month of the year; physical senses are made more sensitive. Hartley house blazed out in autumn splendor. What had been beautiful before was now glorified.

I could have hours, but not complete days of happiness. I could use my common sense part of the time, but Isobel broke it down at other times. Occasionally I thought her willful and tried to believe that she amused herself by playing the devil with the only man available, but when I came to my senses, I knew I was a fool.

All she did was to associate frankly and friendly with the only available man, and if she liked to be with me, it was a compliment I did not see that I deserved.

With the return of normality, with Jed back and immediate alarms quieted, our family routine was re-established. Dinner, which had been less the sociable occasion that it might have been, because of Jed's malevolent superserviceability, became a pleasant event.

Heretofore Jed had made it a point to restrict and embarrass our attempts at easy conversation. Now he withdrew and left us to ourselves.

It was owing to this extraordinarily favorable disposition that I, coming to dinner one evening in a sullen mood, had opportunity to take up a subject which concerned me.

"Mrs. Sidney," I said when Jed had placed the coffee-tray beside her and had retired, "I must ask you to release me from the absurd position I am in."

"What position, John?" asked the kindly lady.

"I am engaged to Isobel," I said.

"Which is a torment and a trial," said Isobel.

"It is," I replied with warmth. "It is

a trial and torment from which I wish release. I do not want to be hedged in by the absurdities of this arrangement."

"John, my boy," said Mrs. Sidney, "what's happened to you?"

"Nothing, but I'm confused. I'd feel better if Isobel and I were not on this preposterous footing."

"But there was a reason," Mrs. Sidney suggested mildly, "and it still exists, and we relied upon you, John. We don't want to make you unhappy, but you don't care for Isobel. That's so apparent, and it helps us so much."

"I don't care whether he cares for me or not," said Isobel suddenly. "We are going to remain engaged. Get your precise mind reconciled to the fact, John. While you are in this house, you and I are engaged to be married."

"Isobel!" her mother exclaimed.

"I'm going to have the freedom that this man John brings me as my betrothed," said Isobel. "Both of you can reconcile yourselves to that. John, you are a victim. You are engaged to me, and I know you are unhappy. Mother, you see me do things because I am engaged to John. Well, I intend to remain engaged and to do things—and I love you both."

And, by George! she danced up and kissed her mother and kissed me.

CHAPTER XIII.

At times I hated myself as a methodical person, but it did no good. I was methodical, and from it there was no escape. I kept a diary. And each night as I made an entry, I turned back to the day of the year before. In doing so this night I read in the entry of the previous year: "Mr. Sidney made a sudden and astonishing recovery of strength. He walked about his room without assistance and was in a high degree of animation."

I recalled that night with the sharp interest because the entry I was about to make this night was substantially if not precisely to the same effect. Mr. Sidney had again revealed an astonishing recovery of strength and had displayed the greatest animation. He had asked us to have our dinner in his room, a thing very seldom done, and he had been wonderful as the majestic, courteous head of the family, full of humor and joviality.

Jed was an amiable servitor, bantered by Mr. Sidney from time to time, Isobel's animation was as infectious as her father's, but Mrs. Sidney, I thought, had a look of apprehension in her eyes which was something apart from the pleasant smile on her face. She seemed to find the occasion significant, and I wonder that I had to read my diary to be refreshed in memory.

When I had read it, I also saw the significance, and turning the page in the record of the year before, I read: "Mr. Sidney is in a condition of exhaustion which might be called a complete and dangerous collapse."

Dr. Brownell, summoned in alarm, says that during his acquaintance with the case this transition overnight from extraordinary activity to exhaustion has been noted once every year and at approximately the same time of the year, if not precisely on the same date.

The apprehension which Mrs. Sidney could not wholly conceal had this good foundation. Mr. Sidney was in the periodic miracle of renewed health and strength, but for whatever cause, he would be found tomorrow morning in a precarious condition of weakness.

The event seemed so certain that I thought it best to acquaint Dr. Brownell that night of the premonitory symptoms.

I decided to telephone a message to Dr. Brownell's residence in the city, to be given to him immediately if he were awake or as soon as he arose in the morning. I did not want to be overheard, by any chance, by any one, in telephoning this premonitory message, and thought that the office would be my most secure place.

The house was not yet in full darkness when I came down the stairs to the main hall. It was lighted, and the stairway leading directly to Mr. Sidney's room was lighted, which indicated that Jed was still with Mr. Sidney.

The office door never was locked. I did not want Jed blundering in on me while I was telephoning. He would be along presently, I thought, and I decided to go out on the main portico until by the extinguishing of the lights I should know he was on his way to bed.

I was on my way to act on this plan when the light in the stairway leading to Mr. Sidney's room was extinguished, and I knew Jed was on his way downstairs. I did not have time to reach the entrance. I doubted that I even had time to retract my steps. I did not want to meet Jed. So I stepped into a sort of little lounging space off the hall, which was quite dark.

In a few minutes Jed went by, humming, not singing. I had expected him to be very tipsy, considering the jovial mood of Mr. Sidney. It had even occurred to me that once a year, on a certain date—one to be commemorated—Mr. Sidney joined Jed in the wine, and that this caused the relapse. But Jed was not drunk, his step was steady.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Something Doing Then.

If only more millionaires had the imagination of poets, sighs a Florida editor, what a wonderful world this might be! But wouldn't it be a still more wonderful world if more poets had the incomes of millionaires?—Springfield Republican.

Burke on National Defense.

"Education is the cheap defense of nations," was uttered by the English statesman, Edmund Burke.

CONDENSED CLASSICS

RICHARD CARVEL

By WINSTON CHURCHILL

Condensation by Hon. David I. Walsh, United States Senator



Winston Churchill has been almost as versatile as his English namesake. It is a far cry from the story of romantic adventure and the historical novel to the tale of reforming tendencies, political, social and religious. He has an acute knowledge of what will interest the great public, and writes a story about it in such a way that he becomes a phenomenal best seller. He has learned the profession of writing novels by novel writing, and he learned to portray people by careful study of those he wanted to use. He has acquired a power of characterization that is almost photographic. He uses this power to present people of great appeal to a large body of Americans, for they are the type known to many. All this shows the seriousness of the man. That his political novels, for instance, are real stories of politics is shown by the fact that a former president of the United States and two former governors of Massachusetts have consented to retell them in shortened form.

Winston Churchill has written his best book, so far, in the opinion of most readers, in "Coalition." It portrays a vital phase of American political life; it has had a potent influence in improving the conduct of our public affairs. In "Jehovah" he has created his greatest character, as yet, one that will probably take permanent rank in American literature.

I TAKE no shame in the pride with which I write of my grandfather, Lionel Carvel, Esq., of Carvel Hall, in his lordship's province of Maryland, albeit he favored his majesty. He was no palaverer turned out like my uncle Grafton, whom I knew for a great rascal who had been banished to his estate in Kent county for saying in my grandfather's presence that my mother had not been fit to marry a Carvel. But if Grafton was a shadow on my boyhood, there was also a great light, and this was Mistress Dorothy Manners, my constant playmate.

Dorothy bloomed early, and too soon became a great beauty, with all our Annapolis macaronis at her feet. Thanks to her poplaph father, Mr. Marmaduke Manners, she gave me to know that none but an English earl could serve her for husband.

My boyhood was passed in stirring times. 'Twas in the summer of 1763, made memorable by the Stamp Act, that I first came into touch with the deep-set feelings of the period, although I had already learnt from my friend, Mr. Henry Swain, a lawyer and a man of note among our patriots, the doctrines that were kindling righteous revolt. My friendship with Patty Swain, his daughter, had begun early, and it was she who gave me heart to hope that Dorothy, for all her fine airs, still thought sometimes of her childhood sweetheart.

Not until my uncle Grafton poisoned his ear against me did my grandfather learn how strong was the republican spirit that stirred me. "A Carvel against the king" was all he said. But I saw that Grafton had triumphed; and to tell the truth it was no pleasant thing for me to set my face against the king for whom my father had died.

About this time Dorothy's wish was fulfilled and she went to London. Soon Lord Comyn arrived at Annapolis with news that every macaroni in London, including himself, was in love with her and that the Duke of Chartersea, a great rake, appeared to lead the race. There was sadness in the pride this gave me; nevertheless, I was drawn to Lord Comyn, a true man.

My grandfather falling seriously ill, my uncle effected a reconciliation. Soon I realized that Grafton was plotting to cheat me of my birthright and make himself heir to Carvel Hall.

Even murder was tried. One night I was drawn into a duel with Lord Comyn on a pretext. Comyn, as loath to fight as I, wounded me, but the fight only made us closer friends. Soon after Comyn had sailed for England a second attempt to kill me changed the course of my life. I was kidnapped by pirates, and only that I had the makings of a fighting sailor I should have been slain. From the pirate I was rescued by a British brigantine, captained by one John Paul, who, for the discipline he maintained, might have been a naval commander. He recognized me as a gentleman and told me how he was returning to Scotland to say good-bye to his mother, for, he said, Scotland had not treated him well. After that he proposed to go to London. I jumped at this, for was not Dorothy there? So, Paul's said errand done, to London we went, choosing always the best coaching inn, Paul being for playing the gentleman. At London we put on a bold front and went to the Star and Garter in Pall Mall. I at once set out to find Mr. Manners, and caught him at his door, but he feigned not to see me, whereupon Mr. Dix, my grandfather's agent,

declared I was an imposter and had us both thrown into jail.

After three weeks' rescue came from an unexpected quarter—from Jack Comyn, who brought Dorothy to meet us at the prison gates. I was overwhelmed. Dorothy greeted me so warmly that I almost believed Comyn and Patty to have been right when they vowed that Dolly loved only me. Paul declared he was "an American, the compatriot of the beautiful Miss Manners."

I was minded to go back to America at once and reward Paul, but Comyn would not hear to this, declaring that I alone could save Dolly from Chartersea. I knew that Comyn, in telling Dorothy that I loved her, had sacrificed himself. When I met Mr. Manners he declared that he had not seen me on the former occasion, but I knew he lied. As for Paul, when he saw how the land lay, he gave us the slip and sailed for America as captain of the Betsy bark.

In the betting books of 'White's and Brooks' is the record of much of my life in London, for I traveled in fast company. My friendship with Charles James Fox is a story in itself. He admired highly my defense of the colonies, although he did not then openly espouse our cause. Fox warned me that Chartersea was plotting against me, and proof came when the duke wagered that I could not ride Baltimore's horse Pollux, for Pollux was a man killer. Nevertheless, I rode the beast, and when Chartersea tried to follow me Pollux threw him into the Serpentine. Thus foiled, Chartersea waylaid me at Vauxhall, and I knew that Manners had helped to trap me. Comyn came to my rescue and was wounded, but I was unhurt.

Manners showed his hand when he brought me news that my grandfather was dead and Grafton was master of Carvel Hall. I struck him. Mr. Dix was quick to tell me that I was penniless, but Comyn insisted on offering his security for me.

Then back I went to Annapolis, to learn that my uncle had intercepted my letters so that my grandfather had believed me dead. Henry Swain had been successful in business and he made me factor of his new estate. There I stayed until the dreary summer of 1774, when Liberty lost a friend by the death of Mr. Swain. His last wish was that I should marry Patty, but when I asked her to marry me she saw what was in my heart and asked me whether I loved her. And for that there was no answer. But when I rode away to fight for my country she told me she would pray for me—and for Dorothy.

At Annapolis, on my way north, I received a great surprise. Learning that one Jones had spoken of me, I went to see him and found that it was John Paul himself, who had an estate in Virginia and was bound for Philadelphia to lay before congress his plan for an American navy. How he succeeded is known. I sailed with him, and was with him in many of his great sea fights, the last being that of his Bon Homme Richard against the Serapis, in the North sea. This was the hottest battle of all, and my last memory of it is the sight of a naked seaman rushing at me, pike in hand.

I awoke. Where was I? What room was this? Who was this coming to tend me? Who but Mammy Lucy, Dorothy's old nurse, to tell me that I was in London, in Mr. Manners' house? Where was Dolly? I was to see her soon, if the doctor permitted. She came! The little room was heaven, though I was stretched on a bed of pain. Mrs. Manners answered my questions. Jones had contrived to let Dolly know I was wounded and in hospital in Holland, and Comyn had brought me to England. I learned also that my uncle had been deprived of his estate for treachery and that Carvel Hall was mine. And now I was to be smuggled out of England again. This time Fox played smuggler, and soon Dolly was to be my wife. But did I not love Patty? she asked me. I told her the truth.

"Dear Richard," Dolly said, "I believe I have loved you all my life." We were married on the 15th of June, and Patty dressed the bride. Poor Patty. You have heard your mother speak of Aunt Patty, my dears.

But I had regained my health the war for independence was won. "I pray God that time may soften the bitterness it caused, and heal the breach in that noble race whose motto is Freedom. That the Stars and Stripes and the Union Jack may one day float together to cleanse the world of tyranny!"

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Faith in Mascots.

It is not uncommon for women in Scotland to become unnerved over the loss of a mascot. A few weeks ago in a small town in the south of Scotland, a party of four sat playing whist. During the whole of the first rubber the hands dealt to one of the players were deplorable. She got up at intervals and turned the poker and various other offending pieces of furniture, but in vain. Then she went upstairs for "Peter," a small silver "furns up." She put him on the table beside the cards that were being dealt to her. And from that moment onwards she and her partner scarcely lost a trick! Probably it was only coincidence, but it was just one of these particular coincidences upon which people of a certain type of mind willingly would found a universal superstition, and which bring added zest to the mascot mill of marvelous happenings.